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AUTHOR Adams, Arlene
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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a program that is developing assessment procedures to measure a student's preparedness for the professional year. This assessment technique seeks to capture an individual's teaching capabilities that may not be evident in traditional assessment methodologies, and to examine the development of teaching capabilities over time. Portfolios allow students an opportunity for self-reflection on their growth and development that they might not otherwise experience. Portfolio assessment examines five dimensions: professionalism, planning, instruction, communication, and management. For each dimension, students must submit an artifact--any type of evidence that a requirement has been fulfilled--along with a written rationale for the artifact and a verification statement. Requirements for the portfolio include: evaluative checklists from cooperating teachers and college instructors; a videotape of a lesson taught by the student; evidence of professional activities and educational service; a written philosophy of education; a practicum artifact; and proof of completion of a standardized personality inventory. Procedures for preparing and reviewing portfolios are summarized, as well as guidelines for evaluating the portfolios. Concerns still under consideration include necessary curriculum changes to accommodate portfolio assessment, timelines for students, and time burdens for faculty. (ND)

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ED 387 458

A PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS FOR ADMISSION TO THE PROFESSIONAL YEAR: THE PROJECT SO FAR

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Arlene Adams, PhD

Assistant Professor of Elementary Education

School of Education, Coastal Carolina University

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

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A PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS FOR ADMISSION TO THE PROFESSIONAL YEAR: THE PROJECT SO FAR

In the spring of 1994, the faculty who were involved in teaching the Senior Methods courses met to discuss ongoing problems with the Senior Block. One area of difficulty was seen as the organization of the Senior Block courses, which seemed to overlap in various ways, and to be missing vital information in some other cases. Another perceived problem was the lack of an assessment device which would allow us to determine whether or not students were sufficiently well prepared to proceed into Senior Block responsibilities. We decided to defer reorganization of the actual Senior Block courses until we had developed an assessment which would measure student's preparedness to enter the professional year.

We agreed that an appropriate assessment device for this point in the program was a portfolio procedure. Interested faculty were asked to develop and submit tentative plans for a portfolio procedure in the fall of 1994. This plan is a result of that request.

Since the fall of 1994, all members of the Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education have been involved in continuing discussions about this plan, and further directions in which it might evolve. One major consideration has been the statewide adoption of the ADEPT program, which will be used to assess the performance of teaching for preservice, novice, and experienced teachers in South Carolina beginning in the fall of 1995. As a

faculty we felt it was important for us to include preservice elements of the ADEPT program in our preservice assessment procedure. Other concerns have also been discussed, such as our School of Education mission and philosophy, and our vision of the best beginning teacher that we can possibly produce. These concerns will undoubtedly be reflected in our final implementation of this proposal. We are committed to establishing a portfolio procedure for the department, to begin as a pilot project in the fall of 1995.

Background and Rationale

This portfolio procedure is intended as an assessment of preservice teachers before their entry into the Professional Year, ie, the senior level methods courses and the student teaching internship. This assessment technique seeks to capture individual's teaching capabilities that may not be evident in traditional assessment methodologies. Portfolios also examine the development of teaching capabilities over time. The portfolios that will be examined by this procedure measure the same dimensions as the state - mandated student teaching assessment, but at a different level of proficiency. These elements allow the evaluation of individual students as well as evaluation of the effectiveness of the teacher - training program.

Why assess at admission to the Professional Year?

We are concerned about increasing the competence of the teachers we recommend for certification. In order to do so, we must raise the expectations and standards to which our students are held.

Specifically, we cannot continue remediating students' deficits during their senior year courses and responsibilities. We want to be confident that the students enter the Professional Year already in possession of important competencies.

There is a strong possibility that we may eventually expand the portfolio procedure to include an evaluation at the program entry level at 60 credits, as well as at the end of the student teaching internship.

Why Portfolios?

Portfolios are designed to allow students to demonstrate competencies that are hard to document, as teaching behaviors are. They are well - suited to showing growth over the time involved in a teacher preparation program. They make use of authentic assessment. Appropriate assessment should be a balance of objective, standardized measurements and authentic assessment measures. The program makes use of several types of standardized assessments, but very little authentic assessment. This procedure would fill that gap.

Portfolios are an assessment technique that is growing in importance in educational environments. One way that our students can become familiar with the technique is to experience it as students.

Portfolios also allow students an opportunity for self - reflection on their growth and development that they might not otherwise experience. They require that students engage in

synthesis and higher level thinking skills that they might not otherwise apply to their growth as teachers.

The Dimensions.

Various dimensions are examined by the portfolio procedure. These are: professionalism, planning, instruction, and management. Each dimension involves up to 10 specific requirements, which are delineated here. These requirements are in many cases similar to those in the new ADEPT requirements for assessment of teaching. (The ADEPT requirements are provided in Appendix A.)

Professionalism

Shows initiative (proposes ideas, makes suggestions),
shows responsibility,
articulates a philosophy,
shows knowledge of the profession,
makes optimal use of resources,
other (optional).

Planning

Plans lessons,
sequences procedures,
assesses objectives,
prepares adequate materials,
orders instruction within the established scope and sequence,
other (optional).

Instruction

Implements plans,

possesses a repertoire of strategies,

adapts instruction to the situation,

adapts instruction to the needs of students,

maintains records of student achievement,

evaluates instruction for self - improvement,

other (optional).

Communication

Uses accurate oral expression,

uses appropriate oral expression,

uses accurate written expression,

uses appropriate written expression,

develops rapport with students,

demonstrates clarity in giving directions,

demonstrates clarity in conveying content,

uses appropriate communication with other professionals,

other (optional).

Management

Implements the existing system,

establishes authority,

handles disruptions appropriately,

conveys expectations to students,

maintains firmness,

maintains poise,

other (optional).

Meeting the Requirements

For each of the requirements in all 5 dimensions, students submit an artifact, a written rationale, and a verification.

The Artifacts.

A portfolio artifact is any type of evidence that a requirement has been fulfilled. An artifact may be a paper written for a course, a lesson plan used in a practicum, a set of materials used in instruction, a video tape of a lesson or activity, a written description of a project, or other type of evidence.

The Rationales.

Each artifact must be accompanied by a written rationale in which the student describes how the artifact meets the requirement. One artifact may be used to satisfy more than one requirement, but a separate rationale must be written for each requirement.

The Verifications.

Each artifact must be accompanied by a signed statement from an education professional that the work contained in the artifact is indeed the work of the student. Possible educational professionals include college professors or practicum supervisors, cooperating teachers, teachers or supervisors at an education - related employment.

Options.

Within each dimension students have the option of substituting **one** unnamed artifact for one of the described artifacts. This optional artifact must be demonstrably appropriate for the dimension in which it is used.

Required Elements

There are a variety of activities that students take part in during their first three years in the program which we felt should be represented in the portfolio. These activities therefore must be represented somewhere in the portfolio, but exactly which requirement they would apply to would be the individual student's choice. These requirements are as follows.

a. Evaluative checklist from the cooperating teachers of each early field experience;

b. Evaluative checklist from the college instructors of each of the 100-, 200-, and 300-level education courses;

c. A videotape of a lesson the student has taught, either in a field experience or in a microteaching assignment, with lesson plan included;

d. Evidence that the student has joined a professional education organization, and subscribed to an education journal of their choice;

e. Evidence that the student has participated in some educational service other than those required by the program; this could be on either a volunteer or a paid - employment basis;

f. A written philosophy of education for each of the three years in the program, showing the changes and growth over time;

g. At least one artifact from each practicum experience;

h. Evidence that the student has taken a standardized personality inventory with education / teaching relevance (such as but not necessarily specifically the Myers - Briggs or the Teacher - Perceiver), and been counseled on the basis of the results.

The Portfolio Procedures

The following procedures are in the initial planning stages. As was the case with all the parts of this plan, these procedures were intended as a starting place for discussion for the entire faculty. Undoubtedly, there will be considerable alteration of these proposed procedures as the faculty introduce and implement concerns that have not been considered here.

Our concerns for these procedures take two forms. First, we have serious concerns about the uncompensated time burden that faculty will be required to assume for managing the procedure. One concern is that a sufficient number of faculty be involved to insure

the reliability of ratings. However, rough calculations show that a four member committee will require a minimum of 60 hours per faculty member per year in a typical year, while a three member committee will require 50 hours. It is not clear how faculty will find this time in addition to all their other responsibilities. We are therefore seeking ways to streamline the procedure while preserving a high reliability.

Second, we are concerned about the logistics of managing the portfolio procedure and storage. We are not sure who should be responsible for maintaining the portfolio materials, the School of Education or the students, over the three years that the student will need to keep them. We want the students' materials to be secure, and to limit the opportunities for plagiarism, but we also want the students to have ready access to the materials so that they may be working with them on a regular basis.

Preparation.

Students are introduced to the portfolio procedure in the earliest Education courses, and given specific instruction in the portfolio requirements that may be met in each particular course. In the second half of their Junior year, students arrange with their advisor to convene a committee, and submit their portfolio.

The Portfolio Committee.

The portfolio committee consists of the following School of Education faculty members for each student: one selected by the student to be an advocate for the student, one selected by the

department to represent the department, and one selected by the School to represent the program administration.

The Portfolio Interview.

The committee considers the portfolio for 30 days, and to assign tentative score points to the artifacts. The committee then meets with the individual students in an interview. The students give a brief summary of their strengths and weaknesses, and the committee has an opportunity to ask questions about specific artifacts. The student then retires and the committee votes on final scores for the artifacts for the student. The student is notified in writing with a detailed description of the committee's findings. If the student's portfolio passes the initial attempt, they are permitted to register for the first courses in the Professional Year.

Procedures for students who do not pass the initial attempt.

Students who do not pass the initial attempt have several options. They may choose not to go on in the Education Program. If they choose to go on, they may first opt to request in writing that the committee to reconsider their scoring of specific artifacts. If the committee reconsiders and the portfolio then passes, the student may register for professional year courses. Students may decide to forego the reconsideration request, and proceed to embark on an informal remediation plan. In this step, they revise their portfolios independently, and resubmit to the committee for consideration. Students may also forego this step, and proceed

directly to the formal contract step. In this step, they develop and complete (with prior committee approval) a formal course in remediation. After completing this remediation contract, they may resubmit their portfolio for a final attempt.

The Rubrics

Each artifact (together with its rationale) will be evaluated by the means of 5 rubrics. Each rubric describes the performance that rates a five (high score), a three, and a one (low score).

Addresses the requirement:

5 - closely

3 - adequate, could be stronger

1 - does not address the requirement

Displays synthesis

5 - uses a wide variety of sources of information

3 - uses a variety of sources

1 - uses a single source

Shows self - evaluation and insight

5 - extensive, includes positive and negative aspects and accurate observation

3 - adequate, could be stronger in either aspect, or in accuracy of observation

1 - little evaluation or insight

Shows clarity and correctness of expression

5 - good command of standard written American English, content and ideas are clearly stated

3 - adequate command, a few scattered errors or unclear areas but these are not obtrusive

1 - expression is unclear or shows consistently faulty command of standard written English

Displays organization

5 - organized effectively, elements are easily found and identified

3 - adequate organization, some scattered areas of disorganization but these are not obtrusive

1 - confused organization, most material cannot be easily located or easily identified

Scoring the Portfolio

During the examination period before the interview, the committee members each assign tentative score points to each artifact. They do so by considering each artifact in terms of each of the rubric elements. After the interview, committee members assign final score points, and these are averaged for all the rubric elements and all committee members. This averaged score is considered to be the final score point for the artifact. The average score for the artifacts within a dimension must be 3, with no artifact scoring a 1. If any artifact scores a 1 as a final score point, the student is considered to have failed that

dimension. A student must pass all dimensions to pass the portfolio procedure.

After the portfolio interview, the students are provided with a detailed written explanation of their performance. Students who have failed are expected to remediate their areas of weakness on subsequent attempts. Students who elect to make additional attempts after a failure must demonstrate competence only in the dimensions that did not pass initially.

Introducing the Portfolio Procedure

The Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education will begin to introduce portfolio modules in the earliest education courses in the fall of 1995. We will also at that time provide a short - term "crash course" in portfolio development to the sophomores and juniors. These sophomores and juniors will be required to proceed through the portfolio process as they come to the end of their junior year, and will be given a detailed evaluation of their portfolio. However, a failing score will not prevent them from going on in the education program. The first students for whom the portfolio procedure will be an actual gatekeeper will be the students who have had three full years of instruction and preparation to develop their portfolios; ie, for students who will be juniors in academic year 97 - 98.

Evaluation of the Procedure

This portfolio procedure was proposed to the faculty of the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at Coastal

Carolina University in October, 1994. It is presently undergoing an evaluation process. The faculty is discussing the various aspects of portfolios described here, and suggesting a number of possible alterations. The procedure will also be presented to several student groups within the Education Program for their evaluation. Several other groups of professional educators will also be consulted. The information contributed by these groups will be taken into consideration by the faculty as they implement this procedure.

Concerns Still Under Discussion

The requirements of the portfolio procedure as presently framed will without doubt require that the courses in the first three years of the education program will have to change. We will need to move a great deal of the content that is now taught in the senior year to earlier in the program. Should we add a course? If so, what course do we eliminate to make room for it? Where should it go in the course sequence? What form should it take?

The timeline for the students to present their portfolios has been discussed at length. If they are completing the portfolio requirements and assembling their portfolio during the second half of their junior year, when will they have the opportunity to present it before they enter Professional Year courses? And what happens to their timeline if they do not pass immediately? The proposal as currently framed would require that the students who do not pass the first time around would probably have to sit out of education courses for at least one semester.

The time burden for faculty members in terms of portfolio committee service was discussed. For example, this academic year we have about 160 elementary and early childhood seniors; each of these would require minimum of approximately 4 faculty work - hours for portfolio committee members. At this point, no additional compensation is being considered for this committee participation.

Several suggestions have been made. One possibility is that the adjunct and part - time faculty who teach regularly for the department, and those who supervise interns be included as possible committee members. This would reduce the burden on individual full time faculty.

Another possibility is for the Education faculty who teach Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior courses to sign off on the requirements that a student completes in their courses. These requirements would not be re - evaluated at the admission to the Professional Year. This would reduce the time that faculty would be required to spend at the point of the interview. However, this procedure would make it less likely that the portfolio would represent the student's growth over time in a particular skill.

It has been suggested that the plan as presently written allows insufficient demonstration of growth over time. We might require that any artifact which is completed in the first two years must be revisited by the student in the junior year in order to show growth.

It was emphasized that the portfolio procedure should not be easy for students to pass. It should pose real challenges for the students, and provide a genuine point at which we can catch and

eliminate the students who are not competent. How can we reconcile this with the additional time burden imposed on committee members when students do not pass the initial attempt?